

## Messages on Candy Hearts

Learn how the makers of NECCO Sweetheart Conversation Hearts keep up with the times.

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Words of love change with the times, and the makers of NECCO Sweetheart Conversation Hearts aim to keep up. While "Be Mine" is a sentiment always in fashion, in recent years sweeties have been able to share candy hearts bearing such modern mottoes as "Fax Me" and "Yeah Right." And as of last Valentine's Day there were 12 new sweet thoughts to choose among, thanks to the many eager candy-eaters who have sent their suggestions to NECCO.

### Winning Words

Millennium-specific candy hearts brought messages of love like "2000 Kisses" and "2000 Hugs." "Romeo" and "Angel." "Amore," "Swing Time," "Much Ado," and "In the Mood" served up romantic themes.

The rest of the 12 new mottoes came from readers of *American Girl* magazine. "There's nothing better than tapping into the minds of youth for new hearts ideas," says Walter Marshall, the NECCO vice-president known as "the King of Hearts" for his role overseeing the mottoes. The winning ideas from the magazine's readers are "Got Love," "Girl Power," "Time Out," and a peace sign—the hearts' first wordless slogan.

**"It is a big responsibility to be the wordsmith of romance.... The mottoes can't be offensive, distasteful, or too wordy. That eliminates a lot of ideas immediately."**

**—Walter Marshall,  
NECCO Vice President**

Sweethearts Colors and Flavors
pink
cherry
yellow
banana
orange
orange

green
lemon
purple
grape
white
wintergreen
brown (new)
chocolate

### Sweet Talk for the Times

Some favorites among the more than one hundred Sweetheart sayings have been in circulation since the hearts were first factory-made in 1902. These classics include "Kiss Me," "Sweet Talk," and "Be Mine." Sometimes a motto is discontinued for a time and then makes a reappearance; others are gone for good. Sayings considered outdated by NECCO include the funky "Dig Me" and the cheerful "You Are Gay."

"It is a big responsibility to be the wordsmith of romance," says Marshall. "The mottoes can't be offensive, distasteful, or too wordy," he explains, which "eliminates a lot of ideas immediately." Mottoes also need to make sense to people of different generations, ruling out such recently proposed lingo as "Phat" and "Buff." Space is also an issue. Conversation hearts come in two sizes—the standard 1/2 inch and the larger 3/4 inch model. The small hearts generally can fit no more than two words with four letters each, while the large hearts may accommodate two words with six letters each. Fortunately, creative phrasing can help fit longer sentiments onto the tiny hearts, as in the case of "EZ 2 LOVE."

### Say It Again, Sweetheart

If you miss some of the old sayings, or would like to see some of your own, you can have them custom-made. The catch is that you'll have to buy a full production run, or about 1.7 million candy hearts. But you'll have plenty of time to eat them- they should stay fresh for at least five years.

Production of Sweethearts for Valentine's Day 2002 has already begun. There's still a chance to submit your slogan ideas for the coming year, however. NECCO must produce about 100,000 pounds of the candy hearts every day in order to meet the Valentine demand, when about 8 billion hearts are sold in six weeks.

Conversation hearts were invented in the 1860s by the brother of NECCO's founder. These first hearts had printed paper notes tucked inside. The lengthy, old-fashioned sayings included such wistful thoughts as "Please send a lock of your hair by return mail."